
VI. Manage the vegetation on the Forest, according to sound professional procedures in order to provide a sustained yield of timber, benefit other resources, and support the local economy with concern for environmental protect and cost efficiency. Both silvicultural systems and all harvest methods will be used, however, evenaged management will predominate in order to provide long term wildlife and timber quality benefits. Long rotation ages will normally be used to achieve large tree sizes. Conifers will be managed in mixed hardwood stands where possible.

This goal has not been reviewed at this time. Efforts associated with the T&E Amendment have precluded most vegetation management activities for the past few years. The Monongahela NF is currently working on several projects with this goal in mind and will report on this goal during the next monitoring report.

VII. Provide stable supply of Forest products to dependent wood using industry.
Encourage the development of secondary wood using industries in West Virginia.
Encourage cable harvesting technology in the logging industry.

While Forest products have continued to be provided from past decisions, monitoring results of this goal has not been compiled at this time.

VIII. Make minerals available for exploration and development consistent with other appropriate resource uses and protection of the environment. Emphasis will be on energy producing minerals.

Management action(s) taken to achieve this goal:

Privately owned minerals beneath National Forest System land-primarily natural gas and coal-continue to be available for exploration and development with reasonable use of the land surface (Forest Plan, page 91).

The Forest Plan Amendment (No. 4) on Federal oil and gas leasing and development identified about 75% of the federal gas as available for development. There have been no direct changes to the acres available for gas development.

Interested parties have requested specific federal oil and gas acreage within the MNF to be offered for lease. The Forest Supervisor identifies and forwards the lease terms needed for controlling use of the land in order to protect Forest resources. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) conducts a competitive lease sale and issues Federal oil and gas leases to the successful bidders. About 78,600 acres nominated for leasing were waiting to be processed during the period from fiscal year (FY) 2001 through 2003. About 8100 acres forwarded to BLM were leased in FY 2003. An additional 9600 acres were processed by the Forest Supervisor in FY 2003 and BLM will offer them at a future competitive lease sale. Processing and forwarding lease terms to the Bureau of Land Management on some of the remaining federal gas acres nominated for leasing was deferred so that appropriate standards from the Forest Plan amendment on threatened and endangered species could be incorporated into the lease. Processing other nominated acreage which is located within inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) is being delayed until the management of these IRAs is addressed in Forest Plan revision.

Indications are that the natural gas industry continues to be interested in exploration and development of natural gas resources beneath the MNF.

Management actions and results related to ensuring mineral exploration and development are consistent with appropriate resource uses and protection of the environment:

Forest Plan monitoring direction includes items intended to measure if and the extent to which mineral exploration and development are consistent with forest resource uses and environmental protection (Forest Plan, pages 254, 254a, and 254b, Amendment 4, October 1992). These items are:

1. Check on environmental effects and ensure compliance with standards, operating plans, and EAs;
2. Determine if standards and guidelines are being properly and consistently applied;
3. Determine if lease terms provide the Forest Service with enough control to protect Forest resources;
4. Determine if the earth disturbance from gas development is occurring as predicted;
5. Determine how much gas development (or combination of gas development, roads, and timber harvesting) changes water quality by measuring turbidity and duration;
6. Determine if the effects on recreation use from noise is as predicted in the EA; and
7. Determine soil loss off of gas well sites.

The monitoring results discussed in this section primarily address minerals monitoring items 1, 2, 3 and 4. With regard to items 5, 6 and 7: there have been no documented complaints from recreationists regarding noise (Minerals monitoring item 6) from gas development; and minerals monitoring items 5 and 7 have not been monitored.

Monitoring conducted in 2001, 2002, and 2003, and results:

Issued oil and gas leases were reviewed to determine if appropriate Forest Plan standards and guidelines have been included as lease terms.

Requirements to protect National Forest resources and inform lessees of operating requirements were identified in the Forest Plan (Amendment 4) as oil and gas leasing and development standards and guidelines. Monongahela NF oil and gas leases issued between 2001 and 2003 show that standards and guidelines have been appropriately applied as lease terms (Minerals monitoring item 2). Whether or not lease terms provide the Forest Service with enough control to protect Forest resources is determined by the amount of conflict in terms of appeals and litigation between the lessee and the Forest Service over lessee development rights verses Forest resource protection requirements. There have been no irresolvable conflicts. Therefore, lease terms appear to be sufficient to provide for protection of Forest resources (Minerals monitoring item 3).

Active mineral operations were inspected by Forest Service mineral staff to determine compliance with approved operating plans and to look for environmental conditions of concern.

The number of active mineral operations on National Forest System land was 89 in fiscal year 2001, and 91 in fiscal years 2002 and 2003. Commensurate with funding and direction for 2001-2003, Forest Service mineral staff administered 99% of the active mineral operations in fiscal year 2001, and 100% in fiscal years 2002 and 2003, to a standard that ensures compliance with approved operating plan (See Inspection Reports within each mineral operation file) (Minerals monitoring items 1 and 2).

Forest staff inspections of active mineral operations during the three year period found most operations in compliance with operating plans. Operations out of compliance were so in ways that did not create substantial adverse environmental effects. For example, several sites did not have gas well informational signs containing operator name, well number or telephone number; road maintenance was needed on a few access roads; extraneous material had accumulated on a couple of sites and needed to be removed; gas equipment, in some cases, was beginning to show rust and needed paint. On a few well sites, an odor of natural gas was detected. Follow-up with operators brought about the correction of the non-compliance items by the time 2003 inspections were conducted.

Relating to mineral operations compliance with National Forest resource protection requirements, one operator was publicly honored. In fiscal year 2003, Cabot Oil and Gas Corporation, who has been drilling and operating the Horton gas field wells in the Thornwood, West Virginia area, received the West Virginia Council of Trout Unlimited's Silver Trout Award in recognition of Cabot's responsible gas resource development within the Horton gas field.

A review of the cumulative amount of land used and expected to be used by gas developments found that acres of earth disturbance from gas development continues to be less than predicted.

In 2003, an interdisciplinary team looked at some new information about gas well spacing, and whether or not the potential for closer well spacing would result in substantially different effects to Forest land and resources than predicted. The team found that even though gas wells may be spaced closer together in individual gas fields, gas developments and surface disturbance are not expected to be greater than amounts predicted and described for the Forest overall in the foreseeable future. One of the reasons for this conclusion was that surface disturbance associated with natural gas developments has been substantially below levels predicted (1950-2 March 26, 2003 memo to Forest Supervisor).

The 1999 Forest Plan monitoring report notes that, with increasing natural gas prices, gas leasing and development is expected to continue with a focus on the northern half of the Forest. Developments are expected to continue within the amounts predicted even with increased interest in natural gas beneath the Forest. This assessment of future trends is still relevant because gas developers continue their exploration and

development activities at a rate lower than predicted, and their use of directional drilling has continued to reduce the overall amount of surface disturbance needed to develop natural gas within the Forest.

Returns from minerals were tallied and summarized.

Oil and gas leasing and gas storage returns revenue to the Federal government from rents and royalties. The table below shows the returns in thousands (rounded to the nearest thousand) of dollars to the U.S. Treasury from MNF oil and gas lease rents and royalties for the years indicated. Fiscal years 2001 through 2003 are shown in the last three columns on the right in the table below.

Table 16 - Thousands of dollars returned to the U.S. Treasury from Monongahela NF oil and gas lease rents and royalties. (1987-2003)

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Total dollars from oil & gas leasing and gas storage	788	674	655	787	854	435	416	296	421	278	557	658	412	1161
Oil and gas rents and royalties	No data	564	580	709	831	345	280	224	No data	207	No data	No data	177	712
Gas storage	No data	110	75	78	23	90	136	72	No data	71	No data	No data	235	449

Fluctuations in returns correspond with fluctuations in gas leasing and development activity. For example, leases expire at the end of the lease term if they have no production, and until re-leased, there is no rent paid. Fluctuations in natural gas prices may cause operators to change the flow or production rate from existing wells to maximize their revenue, and since royalties are paid on produced gas, fluctuations in royalty returns occur. A general explanation for a jump in revenue is that as a number of gas wells become connected to a pipeline system, royalties are then paid on the produced gas instead of a fixed per acre rent. All these factors can act singularly or interact and be responsible for yearly or short term variation in returns to the U.S. Treasury from oil and gas leasing.

Returns shown for 2002 and 2003 warrant additional explanation. The increase in gas storage returns is due to settlement reached in a dispute over storage field royalties. The large increase in returns from rents and royalties is primarily due to the bonus bids received on leases competitively sold in 2003.

Future trends and direction:

Future trends and direction in mineral exploration and development are not expected to change substantially from that of the recent past.

IX. Improve the social welfare of citizens through education, training, employment, and public safety programs.

Management action taken to achieve this goal

Aquatics

Several efforts were conducted during the 2001 through 2003 fiscal years to provide information and education about aquatic resources management to the public (see Table 17). College students were utilized to assist the Forest in managing for healthy aquatic ecosystems while providing valuable work experiences for individuals with an ambition to work in the aquatics field. The Forest also cooperated with numerous state, local, and private entities to offer various opportunities for the public to learn more about aquatic resources management. Through these efforts, participants were exposed to information that may help increase their understanding of the importance of managing for healthy aquatic ecosystems. Efforts of this nature are expected to continue into the future.

Table 17 - Public information and education efforts concerning aquatic resources management during the 2001 through 2003 fiscal years.

	2001	2002	2003
Temporary Summer Employees (college students employed for aquatic resources inventory/monitoring)	0	2	3
College Internship (assist with water chemistry data analysis)	0	0	1
Randolph County Outdoor Education Programs (classes)	12	12	10
Free Fishing Clinics (events)	5	5	5
Career Day for High School Students (events)	0	2	0

Soils:

The soil resource program works in partnership with the multiple soils conservation entities in the state to address this management goal. The combined efforts of all of the agencies act as a singular strong voice throughout the state to promote soils. Each month the Forest Soil Scientist attends a meeting with the USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) State Soil Scientist and the WVU Agricultural Experiment Station Leader. This monthly meeting provides a venue to discuss up and coming events in the soils arena. Each representative then has an opportunity to plan accordingly so that his or her agency may participate and make the most out of limited available resources. The goal of our combined efforts is to promote the social welfare of citizens through education, training, and employment in the field of soils for the state. The NRCS provides the venue to the private citizen and the WVU Agricultural Experiment Station provides access to the academia population in the state. Each year the Forest Soil Scientist also attends the Annual West Virginia Conservation Partnership Council Meeting in Charleston, WV. This is an additional opportunity to provide outreach and awareness to county Soil and Water Conservation District Boards and other state conservation affiliates that the Forest Service has an active forest soils program and that the Forest Service is looking to manage soils and federal land and incorporate like concepts throughout the state.

Recreation:

The Forest is very active in participating in and supporting the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) and the Senior Community Service Employment Program. We host two YCC crews annually during the summer months and approximately 40 SCSEP Enrollees year-round. These programs provide students and enrollees with work

experience while support the operations and maintenance of our Forest Recreation, Trails, and Wilderness Programs.

Fire:

The fire prevention program focuses on education of the younger school aged children. Adult education has been limited to responding to requests from local, interested organizations.

Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) issues are considered minor within the Forest boundary. Two exceptions are in the vicinity of Canaan Valley and Snowshoe Mountain Resorts. Coordination with the newly appointed State WUI Coordinator has been outstanding. We are planning a mechanical fuels reduction project in FY04 in the Canaan Valley area.

Heritage:

In fiscal year 2001, the incumbent position of Heritage Resources program Manager was vacant until August 2001, very late in the fiscal year.

The Heritage Resources program meets some elements of Goal IX through participating in the Forest Service Passport in Time (PIT) Program, a national public outreach program that provides interested members of the public with hands-on exposure to archaeological field work. Other efforts include participating on the boards of various community public history groups, including the Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation and the Appalachian Forest heritage Area group.

One PIT project was conducted in each subsequent fiscal year (2002 and 2003). These projects provided education and training to vocational archaeologists, students, and retired persons.

Other volunteer time included one day with the former Heritage Resources Program Manager (in 2001), and 80 hours of volunteer time for a Davis and Elkins College student in FY 2002. The student helped catalog historic photographs as part of a practicum in the History degree program at D&E.

Lands:

Nearly all of our landline location and maintenance services are contracted to the private sector. We also cooperate extensively with 3rd Party Partners to effectively lever continually low lands program administrative funding. We respond to requests for assistance in locating landlines common to private boundaries to the extent possible.

Plants:

Two temporary employees were hired in 2002 as a botany crew.

2001 -2003 Overall Program Accomplishments

Soils:

In FY 2003, the soil resource program employed a student from WVU as a summer biological field technician. This individual received training in applying academia based soils knowledge to the field. He assisted in implementing the soil chemistry monitoring program, wrote preliminary reports for soil resource input to NEPA and NFMA documents, and participated in the updated soil survey program led by NRCS in Tucker and Northern Randolph counties. He also worked with the YCCC program on the Gauley Ranger District. He helped supervise this group of young people while digging soil pits in the Desert Branch OA for soil sampling. The goal of employing students in this training role is to provide soon to be college graduates with a view of what a forest soil scientist does in his/her job. It is part of an overall recruitment strategy to attract students into the 470 series, which has very specific education requirements (15 hours of soil science credits).

In FY 2003, a soil monolith was extracted from a forest soil (Ernest Series) by NRCS through an agreement with the Forest Service. The soil monolith was framed and preserved in a display to be hung at the Cranberry Mountain Nature Center. In 2004 a permanent educational exhibit will be constructed that talks about the

importance of soils in the Forest and their role in land sustainability. This exhibit will also include a hands-on-project for children and adults where they can construct their own soil profile in a tube and take it home! The Forest hopes to reach forest visitors and help them become aware of the importance of the resource that they walk upon everyday.

In FY 2003, Forest Service partnered with NRCS, WVU, and West Virginia Association of Professional Soil Scientists to produce a soil survey planner for soil scientists and partners across the state. This 2004 planner will be distributed at conferences and meetings to individuals to highlight the state's soils program.

Recreation:

Table 18 – Recreation accomplishments (2001-2003)

	2001	2002	2003
YCC Enrollees	10	10	10
SCSEP	40	40	40
County High School Mentoring Program	Yes	Yes	Yes
Seneca Rocks Discovery Center I&E Programming	3	3	3
Cranberry Mountain Nature Center I&E Programming	1	1	1

Fire:

Table 19 – Fuels reduction and training accomplishments (2001-2003)

	2001	2002	2003
Completed Prescribed burn at Camp Dawson			44 ac
Conducted basic firefighting to VFD's			3
Conducted basic firefighter training to Camp Dawson		1	

Heritage:

Table 20 – Heritage Volunteer Hours Worked

	2001	2002	2003
Volunteer Hours Worked	8	392	440

These hours were worked by PIT volunteers. These volunteers participated in excavation of a prehistoric archaeological site along the Cheat River.

Lands:

The lands program supervised an enrollee in the Senior Community Service Employment Program (U.S. Dept. of Labor) who was successfully placed in private sector employment in 2002. In 2003, the Forest participated in a series of interagency workshops sponsored by the West Virginia Divisions of Natural Resources and Tourism. Approximately 60 state outfitters and guides attended these programs aimed at assisting these state business interests and promoting quality recreation experiences in WV.

Monitoring conducted in 2001, 2002, and 2003, and results:

Soils:

Monitoring for exhibit receptiveness will occur in 2004 by visitor center staff. Feedback from the distribution of the soil planner will occur in 2005.

Requests are made each year to universities in the regional area (Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Virginia) about the availability of potential summer employees for soils. Forest Service works in cooperation

with the universities and NRCS to gather the best and brightest students for these positions. The results indicate that the number of students eligible to become a 470 series soil scientist is in decline. As well the number of higher-level academia institutions offering the required course work is also declining. The reasons for this vary from institute to institute. However, the concern is a national topic and being addressed at a national level. The MNF closest soils academic partner is WVU. Attempts are being made within the College of Agriculture to maintain current staff levels and redesign current soils courses so that they are more appealing to students.

Recreation:

The National Recreation Visitor Use Monitoring was completed in 2003. Results will be available at the end of 2004.

Monitoring is mainly conducted by one-on-one conversations with visitors to the centers and letters received from groups and individuals who have attended both on and off site programs. In general, letters and comments are extremely supportive of our programs content and quality.

Lands:

We cooperate with agency law enforcement personnel who patrol National Forest System lands extensively and report land related concerns of citizens as well as suspected encroachments.

We continue to cooperate with neighbors in the land adjustment and landline programs. We urge cooperation of adjoining to locate lines prior to initiating private activities near common lines, yet we pursue suspected trespass with aggressive enforcement and mitigation seeking actions when necessary.

Monitoring has revealed that we continue to focus limited personnel and funds on only high priority or crisis issues.

Future trends and direction

Soils:

The MNF will continue to try to employ at least one biological student technician having an interest in soil science. We will also continue to work with our partners in recruitment within the state and verbally support efforts to attract students into the field. MNF will also try to continue to incorporate more soils information into our visitor centers and continue outreach through outdoor education programs and guest lecture opportunities.

Recreation:

Working with the Army Corps of Engineers on recurring review process in Dolly Sods Wilderness for unexploded ordnances. Participate in a variety of public meetings with organizations primarily interested in recreation and/ or heritage resources. Cooperating in the development of posters, brochures, videos, and maps in regards to the unexploded ordnances and public safety in the Dolly Sods area.

In 2003, the Forest hired WVU summer students (8 positions) to assist in completing the National Recreation Visitor Use Monitoring and assisted in the operations and maintenance of the Forest Recreation, Trails, and Wilderness Management Programs.

Educational projects included a Participating Agreement with Appalachian Forest Heritage association and North Central to complete the Cliff Scaling Soldiers of West Virginia Video, as well as numerous interpretive programs at the Seneca Rocks Discovery Center and the Cranberry Mountain Nature Center.

Heritage:

The Forest Service has entered into a sponsored volunteer agreement with Davis & Elkins College for an archaeological field school. It is anticipated that field school will provide the Forest with approximately 2,500 hours of volunteer time for the Heritage Program. The field school will provide the Forest service with a site evaluation conducted at a very low cost. The students participating in the field school will gain experience in archaeological excavation methodology.

X. Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of National Forest Administration through land acquisition, exchange, or donation.

Accomplishments in 2001, 2002, and 2003:

Table 21 – Land Purchases and Adjustments (2001-2003)

LAND PURCHASE AND ADJUSTMENT	2001	2002	2003
PURCHASE	57,716 *	250	0
DONATION	8,405 *	0	0
* above includes 65,625 acres of subsurface minerals			

Acres of land acquired (excluding NRA purchases) - 66,371

Acres of land acquired for the NRA - None, although several appraisals were conducted and offers made within both the Spruce Knob and Seneca Rocks NRA that were too low for sellers. We continue to pursue and prioritize acquisition on a willing seller basis.

Methods of informing legislators and the public about land adjustment needs and building support for the lands program. We have excellent Congressional support for land acquisition proposals. Support from County Officials vary. Some resist the loss of land from the private tax base while others are capitalizing on increasing recreation opportunities afforded by public lands and have hired personnel, advertise, and are developing infrastructure to take advantage of a rapidly growing state tourism industry.

Acres of land exchanged - None – exchanges are opposed by growing segments of our society and severely tax our small administrative budget and resource staff. Most proposals are of little to no advantage to the public. Although we analyze each proposal on its individual merits, we have minimized efforts at exchange.

Miles of landlines located - 38

Miles of landlines maintained - 23

Table 22 – Survey Boundary Maintenance and Location (2001-2003)

SURVEY BOUNDARY LINES	2001	2002	2003
LAND LINE LOCATION	9.07	8.19	20.81
LAND LINE MAINTENANCE	14.01	9.11	0

Funding levels have remained low and costs high although we continue to dedicate a significant portion of our annual lands budget to landline related activities.

Miles of landlines marked to standard - Approximately 1,240

Monitoring conducted in 2001, 2002, and 2003, and results

We continue to monitor lands for protection of U.S. title to lands and interests. Many of these involve suspected encroachments and private claims.

Interpretation of monitoring:

Protection remains a constant challenge and a high priority. Needs are increasing as adjacent private lands are subdivided and sold. Small forest lands staffing is inadequate to meet current needs especially due to the lack of a professional, licensed forest surveyor.

XI. Manage the Forest so that it is an economically efficient unit of the National Forest system.

Management action taken to achieve this goal:

Fee Demonstration and Concessionaire Operators of Developed Recreation Facilities provide the most economical operations and maintenance of these facilities while emphasizing quality and customer service.

Volunteers, Campground Hosts, SCSEPs, and YCC are very effective in reducing the cost/output for recreation and trails activities including the American Hiking Society Vacation Trails projects (2/year).

2001 -2003 Overall Program Accomplishments:

In 2003 Bear Heaven, Laurel Fork, Pocahontas, Red Creek, and Spruce Knob Lake were added to the National Fee Demonstration Program which allows for fees collected to remain on-site to enhance operations and maintenance of the facility and complete needed improvements

Monitoring conducted in 2001, 2002, and 2003:

The National Recreation Visitor Use Monitoring was completed in 2003 results will be available at the end of 2004.

Future trends and direction:

To continue using concessionaires, fee demonstration, SCSEP program, and volunteers in conjunction with our permanent workforce to economically manage our recreation facilities while providing the highest facility and quality service that our current budget allocations permit.

XII. Develop and maintain a high level of open communication and understanding with the public.

Management action is taken to achieve this goal:

Heritage:

The Heritage Resources Program strives to maintain an active, open relationship with professional archaeological associations, scholarly institutions, local history groups, interested individuals, and regional interest groups that emphasize heritage resources. We strive to provide information and support to these groups and individuals in as a timely and efficient manner as possible.

Lands:

We constantly field lands related questions and concerns from the public. We cooperate extensively with private citizens and corporations by providing information related to U.S. Tracts (deeds, descriptions, maps). We respond promptly to Congressional inquiries. We always inform Congressional Constituents, County Officials, and other State Agencies of proposed land adjustment activities and invite their early input to proposals. We publish a well-received newsletter several times annually informing authorized National Forest Outfitters and Guides of program requirements, reminding them of upcoming events, and informing them of new opportunities. This tool has assisted in recruiting needed volunteers for National Forest trail maintenance, has helped control illegal commercial use of the Forest, and provides a periodic reminder that we will provide an electronic link between the Forest computer website and certain authorized private business sites. Posting private addresses on our website is voluntary for those authorized outfitting and guiding businesses who wish to participate. The Forest computer website (<http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/mnf>) has received many favorable comments from the public as well as Forest Service employees. The lands program is an integral part of this site providing links to other agency sites and their Lands and Realty Management information, special use permit forms, and categorized links to businesses as noted above. The latter provides information about businesses authorized to conduct commercial activities related to hunting, fishing, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, mountain biking, canoeing, kayaking and rafting, rock climbing, and hiking and backpacking among other things. It provides benefits to both the businesses and to potential forest users who desire various professional services to contribute to their recreational experiences on National Forest System land. We supplement an agency informational brochure entitled "Obtaining a Special-Use Authorization with the Forest Service" with forest program specifics to aid potential applicants who desire to use National Forest System land for a variety of purposes.

Plants:

Two temporary employees were hired in 2002 as a botany crew.

Accomplishments in 2001, 2002, and 2003:

Heritage:

From FY 2001 through FY 2003, the Heritage Resources Program worked with the Appalachian Forestry Heritage Area (AFHA) to develop their ongoing vision for Heritage Tourism in the region. Currently, the AFHA is attempting to gain national recognition for the area as a National Heritage Area.

Lands:

Our files are filled with documented contacts and emphasize the importance of maintaining open, honest communication with our neighbors, forest users, and concerned citizens.

Future trends and direction:

Heritage:

The current activities are currently underway: 1) we are currently scheduled to host an archaeological field school with Davis & Elkins College (see Goal IX); 2) we are underwriting the cost of an improved Civil War Auto Tour Brochure with the Rich Mountain Battlefield Society; 3) providing funding to produce two or more graduate degrees in archaeology with the University of Kentucky in the context of a Participating Agreement. All of these efforts will help improve our relations with the public, including the academic community, by advancing our appreciation of the history and prehistory of the area. In addition, we will provide input and support in FY 04 to the AFHA for their statement of significance for the application to Congress for National Heritage Area status.

Lands:

The trend is toward increasing numbers of contacts and increased awareness by the public of National Forest activities

Plants:

The Forest ecologist will be working on a NNIS display for use at Visitor Centers to communicate the threat of NNIS to natural communities.

XIII. Cooperate with, and coordinate plans with, other Federal, State, and local agencies and with private groups to improve the management of natural resources and reduce potential conflicts.

Management action taken to achieve this goal:

Appendix A of this document lists all current grants and agreements for the Monongahela NF.

Communication and trust are essential to developing and nurturing long lasting partnerships. As the Grants and Agreements Program on the MNF began to rebuild in 2003, one of the first steps taken was reopening communications with existing partners as well as seeking new partners.

The Partnership Coordinator position was vacant since September 2001, and many partnership contacts were understandably distanced as the position remained empty until January 2003. One of the most important actions for this year involved personal, one-on-one communications with each existing partner, to assess any problems, frustrations or successes that might have occurred during the last two years.

Aquatics

Aquatic resources personnel of the MNF were involved in numerous efforts to cooperate and coordinate with other Federal, State, and local agencies and private groups to improve the management of aquatic resources and reduce the potential for conflicts. The Forest is an active participant in the West Virginia Watershed Management Framework. This organization of numerous federal and state water quality management agencies coordinates operations of existing water quality programs and activities in West Virginia to better achieve shared water resource management goals and objectives. The Forest also coordinates with the WVDNR and frequently interacts with various professional societies (*e.g.* the American Fisheries Society) and private organizations (*e.g.* watershed associations) to discuss and coordinate on management issues of common interest and concern.

Soils

Forest Service meets monthly with NRCS and WVU Ag Extension to discuss local, state, and national soil issues.

Recreation:

On-going Annual Cooperative Law Enforcement Agreements (CLE) with counties to provide additional patrols to increase safety and security at our developed recreation facilities and general forest area.

On-going coordination with WVDNR in managing hunting and fishing activities,

Fire:

The Forest prescribed burn program continues to develop as we learn more about fire's role in the past and as we apply it to various ecotypes across the Forest. Until the Forest Plan is revised we are limited to no more than 300 acres of burning per year due to T&E issues.

Heritage:

As part of our regular schedule of work, we coordinate our actions with the WV State Historic Preservation Office and, when appropriate, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, under the terms of a Memorandum of Agreement that was executed in 1994.

Beginning in 2001, the Heritage Resources program entered into a series of formal agreements that facilitate the daily operations and long-term goals of the Forest Service and the West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT)/Division of Highways (WVDOH) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

Lands:

The lands group cooperates extensively with 3rd Party Partners in land adjustment activities and considers these partnerships critical to our needs. We cooperate with various state and federal agencies in accomplishing land line work, authorizing land uses and administering mineral related activities involving National Forest System lands. We have many examples of authorizations for use of National Forest System lands for infrastructure critical to other agencies and private citizens including roads, communication towers, pipelines, and powerlines. Other authorizations are necessary to provide access to private property or conduct business on public land. We currently administer over 300 such permits.

Minerals:

As opportunities present, the Forest cooperates with caving community organizations to gather information about Forest cave resources and to support cave safety and rescue training activities.

Cooperation in Cave Mapping

In 2003, the Forest cooperated with the Greater Randolph Organization for Speleological Science (a chapter of the National Speleological Society) who are conducting cave mapping in an important karst area in Randolph and Tucker Counties. The Forest authorized access to facilitate survey and mapping in this karst area. The surveying and mapping results will be shared with the Forest Service and will add to the knowledge of Forest resources and help in the management of the Forest's natural resources. Since there is more cave mapping to be done in the area, this mutually beneficial project is expected to continue.

Volunteer Agreement for the Bowden Cave Barricade Project

Bowden Cave Barricade Project Volunteer Agreement was developed between the Mountain State Grotto (a chapter of the National Speleological Society) and the MNF. The Volunteer Agreement grew out of the mutual desires of the Forest Service and the caving community to keep the very popular "wild" Bowden Cave, which had a major ceiling collapse in the spring of 2002, safely accessible for continued public use.

In May 2002, cavers, extremely concerned for public safety, reported to the Forest Service that an extraordinarily unstable ceiling collapse occurred 1800 feet inside the Bowden Cave. After hearing their concerns, the Forest Supervisor closed much of the cave to public use. This immediate response was taken for protection of public health and safety. Subsequently, Forest staff and cavers visited the collapse and identified options to address how to protect the public from harm due to the extreme instability at the collapse. Monitoring in the cave revealed public use was continuing with evidence of ongoing excavation at the unstable ceiling collapse. Given these circumstances, we determined that some kind of physical barrier to exclude the public from the unstable area would be needed. Bowden Cave provides important bat habitat, and is an important recreational cave. The option that addressed all three needs was to install a bat-friendly barricade near the area of collapse on the most frequently visited side of the collapse.

The Mountain State Grotto volunteered to organize and provide the labor to install the barricade and the Forest Service was to furnish materials and supplies. Although some of the pre-work and planning for the project was completed in fiscal year 2003, the actual barricade installation was scheduled for October 2003, and will be included in the 2004 monitoring report.

Plants:

The Monongahela NF has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Nature Conservancy for information sharing.

2001 -2003 Overall Program Accomplishments

Local public, grass-roots organizations are often the most enthusiastic, loyal partners for the Forest. In 2003, communication continued with long-standing partners: Canaan Valley Institute, The Mountain Institute, Potomac Heritage Partnerships, WV Scenic Trails Association, and the local County Visitor Bureaus and interpretive associations. New contacts were made with WV Citizens Conservation Corps, and a forest

commitment supported the efforts of the newly formed Appalachian Forest Heritage Area, as they successfully incorporated in 2003 and now seek National Heritage Area status.

The Forest continues to maintain healthy relationships with the local, state and federal agencies. WVDNR, NRCS, WV Division of Forestry, WV State Police, Sheriff's Departments, and the WV Division of Highways (WVDOH) together partnered with us in thirty-one agreements from 2001-2003. In addition, WVDOH partnerships contributed \$593,000 over the last three years in TEA-21 funding for recreation projects along the Highland Scenic Byway, and the WVDOH was instrumental in securing \$1.4 million in FHWA (Corridor H project mitigation) money to be used for archaeological surveys, and an additional \$226,000 for cadastral surveys for a rails-to-trails project on the Forest in the summer of 2003.

WVU continues to be an active partner in agreements for administrative studies in wildlife, fisheries, recreation and forest products. These instruments provide not only valuable administrative data for the Forest, but an excellent hands-on educational opportunity for the graduate students involved.

Internally, the completion of the Forest entries into the INFRA data base was accomplished in June, 2003. No forest grants and agreements data had ever been entered into this program, so this backlog was the reason the Monongahela was listed as High Risk on an Eastern Region summary from 4/21/03. Now completed, and regularly maintained, the Forest is in compliance with the national INFRA database requirements.

Soils:

Forest Service has fostered a relationship with NRCS and WVU in discussing research needs and getting the university interested in conducting acid deposition effects research on the MNF. NRCS is currently working in agreement under a new MOU with Forest Service to complete a soil survey update on MNF lands in Tucker and Northern Randolph Counties. NRCS completed 15,375 acres of update mapping in 2003. In addition to the update mapping, NRCS completed the sampling of nine soil types on the Hampshire Formation. Forest Service piggybacked on NRCS's efforts by duplicating soil samples and sending the samples into the University of Maine Soils Analytical Lab as part of the 2003 Soil Chemistry Monitoring effort. This effort in cooperation has accomplished much to better the partnership between our two federal agencies and academia. The science and knowledge gained by these efforts will help to create a better soil survey that will benefit all parties.

Recreation:

The Forest developed a Participating Agreement with WVU to complete a Forest Social Assessment and Recreational Opportunity Spectrum Mapping. This has been completed and is available at the Supervisors Office in Elkins, W.V.

In 2002-2003 the Lake Buffalo Fishing Pier and Boat Launch was completed through a partnership with WVDNR and private groups and individuals to provide accessible fishing opportunities for persons with disabilities,

In 2003, we continued the review process with the Army Corps of Engineers to reduce the risk for visitors to the Dolly Sods area from unexploded ordnances.

2003 – Cooperated with WVDOT on the development and enhancement of rail-trail segments located on National Forest System lands.

Fire:**Table 23 – Cooperative Fuels Activities (2001-2003)**

	2001	2002	2003
Completed Prescribed burn at Camp Dawson			44 ac
Coordinated with Fernow Experimental Forest	18 ac	45 ac	32 ac
Coordinated with University of Pittsburgh Rx burn	50 ac		

Heritage:

In 2002, a multi-year blanket permit issued under the authority of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, for cultural resources survey by the WVDON on MNF lands was negotiated and executed by both agencies. This permit allows the WVDON to enter Forest Service lands for the purpose of conducting Phase I survey and Phase II evaluations in the course of performing environmental analysis.

In 2002, the MNF issued to the WVDON and FHWA a Special Use Permit for archaeological and historical surveys on MNF lands for Corridor H.

In FY 2003, the MNF, the WVDON, and the FHWA entered into an agreement to mitigate the effects of Corridor H to archaeological resources on MNF lands. The agreement provides \$1.2 million to the Heritage Resources Program over a five-year period, beginning in FY 04. These funds will be used to evaluate, interpret, and curate the archaeological and historic resources of the Monongahela NF.

Lands:

We develop and administer contracts for services, often enabled by cooperative funds, to high federal standards. Little to no challenge ensues with these standards of program expectations and delivery. We also administer over 100 special use authorizations to standard annually by monitoring their compliance with terms and conditions of the authorizations and Forest Service policy.

Plants:

Various contacts with TNC and WVDNR Natural heritage Program

Monitoring conducted in 2001, 2002, and 2003, and results:

Monitoring in 2003 focused on internal reviews of all existing agreements. In early 2003, the Forest Agreements Coordinator assessed all open agreements for timely payments/invoicing, work progress schedules in relation to expiration dates, proper procedures by program managers on fiscal documentation of invoices, and completeness of official files. All expired agreements were reviewed as to proper close-out procedures and fiscal refunds or de-obligation of funds.

The Forest monitoring efforts indicated we are on the right track when it comes to cooperating with others to meet natural resource management goals. The monitoring indicated a need for training for program managers in policy and procedures for negotiating partnerships. It also revealed a need for better communication between fiscal and program managers and agreements coordinator in the early stages of partnership formation and agreements negotiations. This early cooperation over the past year has already been effective in preventing internal conflicts and has reduced the need for modifications to existing agreements.

In addition to internal reviews, the Forest participated in the national audit by KPMG in 2003 which included emphasis on the fiscal side of the grants and agreements program. The comments received from that audit were favorable. Also in 2003, Region 9 began its own internal reviews of the grants and agreements program in the entire region. The Forest Agreements Coordinator has been an active member at the regional grants, agreements and partnership meetings held in April and November of 2003. The disorganized structure of the

grants and agreements program as a whole, contributes to some of the conflicts occurring in the area of partnerships on a forest and regional basis. This on-going review is a forward step in the process needed to improve the functions of the entire program.

Fuels:

April 12.2002 – Reviewed the Fernow Experimental Forest burn site The full report is available at the Supervisors Office in Elkins, WV.

Lands:

In 2003, 62 non-recreation special use permits were issued for a variety of uses of National Forest System lands. Potential conflicts are avoided or mitigated by analyzing alternatives prior to a decision through the NEPA process for all permits.

Table 24 – Special Use Permits Issued (2001-2003)

PROCESS LAND USE PROPOSALS	2001	2002	2003
NON-RECREATION SPECIAL USE PERMITS	9	5	62 *
RECREATION SPECIAL USE PERMITS	50 **	15 **	20 **

*Above figure includes reissue of existing permits due to expire; ** include processing and administration to standard

In 2002 and 2003 we partnered with the FHWA, WVDOT, and WVDOH in establishing 26 miles of landlines as mitigation to various highway activities. All 66,372 acres purchased between 2001 and 2003 were done cooperatively with 3rd party partners.

Future trends and direction

The future of the entire partnership program in the Forest Service is ever growing. The opportunity to utilize partnerships to leverage our appropriated dollars is crucial to meeting our commitments and accomplishing goals with shrinking budgets. The Forest Service nationally is addressing the issues confronting the partnership process and is actively looking at removing barriers and inconsistencies in the agreements authorities. A national Grants and Agreements Review Team is meeting regularly to discuss changes and concerns.

As direction and leadership steers the program nationally, the Forest continues to remain involved in the regional “organization” of the Grants and Agreements program, because with a better structured regional program, all the forests in Region 9 will benefit. A more effective grants and agreements program will assist in meeting two of the regional goals of financial health and accountability, and organizational effectiveness. As far as future trends specific to this forest, a regional goal of 10% increase in partnerships each year will be easily attainable by the MNF.

Soils:

In 2004, NRCS and Forest Service will continue with the above efforts. WVU plans to foster at least two graduate level studies in cooperation with the Forest Service. One will investigate the effects of acid deposition on forest health, and another study will focus on the use of native seed on various soil types.

Recreation:

Continue to work with a variety of other federal, state and county agencies as well as organizations and individuals to provide high quality recreation opportunities on the MNF.

Fire:

Dr. Tom Schuler, Fernow Experimental Forest, continues to evaluate and assist the Forest's burn program. We anticipate continued cooperation with him in the future as we apply the published literature to our local conditions.

Heritage:

It is not clear that specific FS monitoring of these activities is necessary. However, the results and expenditures of the mitigation agreement will be audited by the WVDOH and FHWA on an annual basis. The implementation of the mitigation plan has the potential to provide a substantial benefit to the Heritage Resources Program in terms of increased overall accomplishments and providing infrastructure and equipment for the future.

Lands:

Our cooperation and coordination with others will continue to be essential to the success of our land adjustment, special uses, and landline programs. The trend is toward continual increases in levels of partnership and cooperation with others, both in the private and public sectors. Demands for use of public lands by private individuals or other agencies continue to increase. This is especially true as reflected by new proposals for recreation special uses.

Minerals:

Given the caving community's desire and willingness to spend many hours devoted to the identification and documentation of caves and the Forest Service's desire for good data about the Forest's natural resources, it is expected that this type of cooperation will continue. The caving community's dedication to caving as a recreational activity combined with its willingness to play an active role in helping to manage and protect cave resources suggests that projects similar to the Bowden Cave project would be foreseeable, as well.

XIV. Permit use of National Forest land by others, under special use or lease authorities, that is compatible with National Forest goals and objectives and will contribute to the improved quality of life for local residents.

Management action(s) taken to achieve this goal:

Plants:

Special forest products fall into this category. Permitted gathering of ginseng, moss, Christmas tree, tree seedlings, cohosh, and evergreen boughs.

Accomplishments in 2001, 2002, and 2003:

Table 25 – Total number, volume, and value of special forest products permitted on MNF: 2001 to 2003

Fiscal year	Moss			Ginseng			Christmas trees		
	No. permits	Volume (bags) ¹	Value (\$)	No. permits	Volume (permits) ²	Value (\$)	No. permits	Volume (trees)	Value (\$)
2001	106	103,700 (pounds)	1,259.00	28	28	280.00	4	24	120.00
2002 ³	10	9,200 (pounds)	104.00	20	20 (pounds)	400.00	7	41	205.00
2003 (through August 2003)	0	0	0	13	13 (pounds)	260.00	5	20	100.00

¹ – A bag is considered a 50 pound feed sack

² – One permit allowed collection of one pound wet root

³ – A moratorium was placed on moss harvest in fiscal year 2002. No permits for moss harvest were issued after October 31, 2001.

Table 26 - Total number, volume, and value of special forest products permitted on MNF: 2001 to 2003

Fiscal year	Camphor vine			Cohosh			Evergreen boughs			Seedlings		
	No. permits	volume	Value (\$)	No. permits	Volume (permits)	Value (\$)	No. permits	Volume (tons)	Value (\$)	No. permits	Volume (seedlings)	Value (\$)
2001	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	12 ²	144.00	0	0	0
2002	0	0	0	1	1 (pound)	20.00	2	20 ²	240.00	0	0	0
2003 (through August 2003)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

¹ - In 1999 the permitting system changed, measurement of volume changed from permit to pounds for some products.

² – Pounds of wet product. This is a maximum set in the permit and it is not known if this amount was actually harvested.

In 2002, agreement with WVU for moss harvest study. Report dated 2003. Still need to use report results to formulate a moss policy for forest.

Monitoring conducted in 2001, 2002, and 2003, and results:

Study set up to determine impacts to population of black cohosh from harvest of black cohosh. Need to return to study site and collect data.

Future trends and direction:

A study on moss harvest on the MNF documents initial findings of target and incidental species (Studlar 2003, unpublished report). Through personal contacts with the states leading dealer in roots, herbs, and other non-timber forest products, the moss harvest in West Virginia as a whole is reported to be a multi million-dollar industry. While moss gathering is not currently allowed on the Forest, there is a demand for this special forest product.

A survey has been made of gatherers of special forest products across the country, including the reasons for gathering a variety of products from public lands (Emery et al. 2003). The report documents a sampling of the diverse population and their reasons for gathering special forest products. Special forest products provide important livelihood support through both market and non-market economic values. Complicating estimates of demand and the determination of fair market value is that markets for special forest products range from local to international. Also, many gatherers and users of special forest products value the social aspects of these products over the economic values.

On the Monongahela and in West Virginia in general, some special forest products have known social significance as well as possible economic importance including ramps, moss, and ginseng. The Forest will continue to provide these products if other ecological values can also be protected while allowing this use. Overlap in economic benefits and personal uses of special forest products complicate the task of collecting fair market value on these products while allowing for free personal use (Emery et al. 2003).

Demand for special forest products is not strictly an economic consideration. Demand for special forest products is likely to rise as society continues to value areas such as National Forest System lands. Also, the special forest products removed from the Forest are likely to change. For example, many plants are being studied as sources of medicines, and the results may create a market for species found on the Monongahela.

XV. Construct and maintain a transportation system that will allow efficient management and safe public use of National Forest lands.

The following table identified road management activities on the Monongahela NF from 2001 through 2003.

Table 27 – Road Management Activities (2001-2003)

	2001	2001	2002	2002	2003	2003	
Miles of road constructed	1.4		3.5		3.2		
Miles of road reconstructed	4.6		7		4		
Number of roads abandoned or decommissioned	4		0		0		
Are fewer roads being constructed and reconstructed than projected by the Forest Plan?	yes						
Are more roads being abandoned than in past years	no						
Miles of each type of road maintained	ML 1	25	ML 1	32	ML 1	0	
	ML 2	167	ML 2	66	ML 2	25	
	ML 3	199	ML 3	166	ML 3	69	
	ML 4	181	ML 4	239	ML 4	217	
	ML 5	32	ML 5	22	ML 5	43	
Miles of each type(system, temporary, woods roads) of road on the Monongahela NF compared to Forest Plan projections in Appendix O	ML 1	234	ML 1	236	ML 1	236	
	ML 2	835	ML 2	822	ML 2	825	
	ML 3	403	ML 3	404	ML 3	404	
	ML 4	255	ML 4	223	ML 4	223	
	ML 5	54	ML 5	55	ML 5	55	
Percentage of roads is closed year round/Seasonally	Year Round		Year Round	?	Year Round	60%	1051 of 1743
	Seasonally		Seasonally	?	Seasonally	9%	160 of 1743
Monitoring conducted in 2001, 2002, and 2003, and results							
Type of monitoring	erl	267	erl	366	erl	212	Electronic Road Log road condition surveys
	bridges	12+-	bridges	12+-	bridges	12+-	

Synthesis and interpret what monitoring reveals about our progress in meeting this goal.

Monitoring to address the following (Forest Plan, p. 254b-255)

1. Road use controls are monitored to determine if road closures are compatible with Plan intent;
2. Road designs are evaluated to determine if road plans meet project intent;
3. Road construction projects and maintenance miles are monitored to determine if road construction conforms to plans;

condition surveys, bridges, major culverts

yes, gates, locks and other closure devices are monitored to ensure their effectiveness
yes, inspectors on-site during construction as well as final inspections